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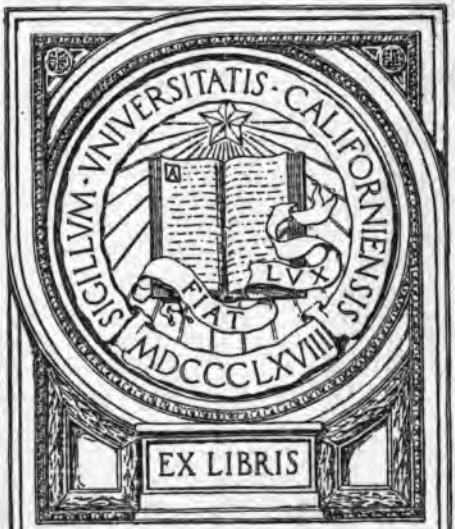

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ADAKICHI HARTMANN

MY RUBAIYAT

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THIRD REVISED EDITION
SAN FRANCISCO
1916

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

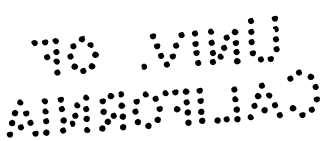
SADAKICHI HARTMANN

MY RUBAIYAT

THIRD REVISED EDITION
SAN FRANCISCO
1916

To Dunbar Wright, a traveler among Men, who "in his own way courts the sun and fashions Arcadia of passing winds and flying clouds."

Gift of
Professor B. H Lehman



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MAIN

INSTEAD OF A PREFACE:

William Marion Reedy,
St. Louis Mirror:

I will drop the mask and tell you the secret of my verses. You say they impress you as being uneven and unfinished. I heartily agree with you. As I have stated in my announcement to the public, a poem of the scope and range of "My Rubaiyat" is never complete. No doubt, it will undergo many changes within the next ten years. I say ten years deliberately. You see, I possess the arrogance of conviction. I believe it will survive, simply because it strikes a popular chord, and attempts, no matter how vaguely, to reproduce a broken melody that hums in every mind. Somebody else may venture forth on similar paths and succeed to please even the fastidious in rhyme. "My Rubaiyat" may be put on the back shelves. Well, we will see. I look at my work with objective eyes. It is a mere youngster now. It will grow and nobody will watch its growth with keener appreciation than I myself. The number of verses will not increase, but I sincerely hope that they will gain in clarity and strength as well as in musical and pictorial wealth of expression.

As for versification, let me make this explanation. I chose the eight syllable stanza on account of its terseness of expression. It is least pliable to any rush and swing of rhythm, but most conducive to the conveyance of fragmentary moods and thoughts. The omission of rhyme I essayed for no other reason than its technical difficulty. To make rhymeless lines read like a poem is the most laborious task a songsmith can set himself. It is the vanity of the alien to show his mastery over a language that was neither his father's nor his mother's tongue. But I object to your statement that I disdain rhythm. I have a vague suspicion that you really mean meter. My meter is rough and wilful and subject to impurities, as for instance counting the last two syllables in words like "happier" and "sunnier" either as one or two, just as my fancy, or rather my appreciation of rhythm, dictates. My rhythm changes constantly but it is palpable, underneath as it were, at all times. I have some experience as a reader (though elocutionists may shrug their shoulders at my style of interpretation—let them shrug) and I have, whenever I write, the habit of reading aloud the words as I put them down. Reading means to get a certain sense and swing, color and sound in the words as one utters them. If my verses contain this possibility of aural gratification they cannot be utterly devoid of rhythm. No doubt my sense of sound alliteration is foreign, unconsciously Oriental. I feel a sound relation, no, even a rhyme suggestion in

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words like "chance" and "spring," "herd" and "feet" at the end of succeeding stanzas. The alliteration of Japanese poets is much subtler (due to the peculiarities of the language) than the word music of our Laniers and Whitmans, although it is never conducted with the elaborate precision of a Poe or Swinburne. It always remains fragmentary, it rarely resembles full orchestration. Also my lines lack the merit of contrapuntal structure. Yet they have one quality which is generally overlooked. They possess pictorial harmony. My long and persistent association with art makes me not only see but think things in pictures. Pictures abound throughout "My Rubaiyat" for all who have the mental pictorial vision to see them. Lines like "turn phantoms with the colder morn" and "in a hilltown among roses" are as concentrated as any image that can be found in a *tanka* (i. e. Japanese short poem).

Critics may contend that pictorial suggestion *per se,* as the main characteristic of a poem, does not conform to the accepted forms of poetry. This objection is meaningless to me. Without the spirit of innovation there would have been no incentive to write the poem. Like the composers of the day I believe in the old ideals but in new methods of expression.

My ambition was to write a simple poem which would appeal to all; to chambermaids as well as cognoscenti, ordinary business men as well as solitary artistic souls. Who will decide whether I have succeeded or failed? Only the public at large. The poem, no doubt, is too didactic for fragile aesthetics who glorify naught but evanescent words, but it is surely no shortcoming to try to express thought. Even exponents of the modern schools attempt this—occasionally. The way of expression is a different matter. It is open to criticism. But excuses that a critic knows nothing about a certain subject, and vet at the same time deliberate pricks at this very thorn in the flesh of his ignorance are sad to contemplate. Rhyme is surely out of date. And the supposed lack of rhythm is merely imaginary. Would you enjoy Japanese or Chinese music? Very likely not and yet they contain as fine a rhythm and as musical a quality as any modern composition. Only they are vaguer, subtle, different.

And on this difference hinges all logical and evasive argument. The practical philosophy contained in "My Rubaiyat," of course, can be attacked for being non-moral or non-religious, but the technique of the poem can be discussed only from one viewpoint.

Sincerely yours,

SADAKICHI HARTMANN.

M Y R U B A I Y A T

I.

What should we dream, what should we say,
On this drear day, in this sad clime!
In the garden the asters fade,
Smoke of weed-fires blurs the plain,
The hours pass with a sullen grace—
Can we be gay when skies are grey!

II.

Would joy prove a more steady guest,
In palm-girt, sunnier Southern lands,
Some lambient world of green and gold
Fanned by the charm of Orient lay!
'Tis vain delusion thus to think
That life will change with change of scene.

III.

Man cannot get away from facts—
Alas, stern duty looms supreme,
For certain things we must perform,
Obey the inward voices' call.
Calm joyous days cannot be wooed
Unless our conscience is at peace.

IV.

Life is to most a weary task,
A ceaseless strife for daily bread,
We cannot act as we would like,
We cannot gain for what we strive.
To bear the burden cheerfully
Is all this earth allows to us.

V.

Our tired soul with faint forced smile
But rarely scales the loftier themes,
Fair Hafiz and Anacreon
Have they drunk, laughed and sung in vain!
Do grove and grange no longer yield
The idyls of Theocritus!

VI.

Was man once happier than now?
Who is there to tell the story
Of slaves or Cesars of the past?
Still our blood is stirred each spring,
Still books and music make us dream,
Why mourn the "snows of yesteryear?"

VII.

There were ever some more favored
Who care-free basked in fortune's sun.
The rest did toil. And you and I?
We hear the same recurrent rhymes,
Like changing seasons, night and day,
We simply come, sojourn, and go.

VIII.

We enter the world unbidden,
Plod along roads as we know best.
One is born rich, the other poor,
Who knows what helps a mortal most.
Ere sleep we rub from our eyes
We are forever what we are.

IX.

The laughter of childhood is gone,
The toy castles we built are lost—
Can we redeem in future days
The disappointments of the past!
Our nursery songs will they change
Into jubilant songs of love!

X.

Light-headed youth, all smiles around
In dew-drenched gardens of spring morns
No heed takes of the dial's stealth.
Youth wants to conquer—rule the spheres,
While the sun runs his ruthless course
And shadows begin to lengthen.

XI.

In open woods some summer night,
The sound of the wind in the leaves—
Two vagrant lovers hand in hand—
O'er treetops the errant moon.
Oh, this mad desire to possess!
To waste the soul on blood-red lips.

XII.

Sex is a power all cherish,
We worship it on bended knees,
Like old wine it yields the magic
Of oblivion and ecstasies,
The moments drift on golden clouds
To regions of the white beyond.

XIII.

Alas, that pleasures never last,
That we must leave the fairy woods
And pass along the great highway.
As much as horizons may beckon,
They flee us the more we pursue
To distances we ne'er can reach.

XIV.

The more we give the less we gain—
This is a bitter truth to tell.
Yet passion is a fleeting thing
As flowers wane in summer's heat,
Thus eager kisses, thigh to thigh
Turn phantoms with the colder morn.

XV.

Why had you, dearest, to leave me!
Why must friend from friend depart.
Perchance, I shall find the answer
Midst howling winds and rain
Where sombre forests sway and moan
And lightnings stir the darkest lairs.

XVI.

Few think they can give without gain,
They attempt to barter with love.
Love comes, it is here, it departs
Leaving wet eyes and broken hearts.
How when we are young can we guess:
Love's winter ne'er returns to spring.

XVII.

Love is a growth, a wondrous plant
That scatters its seed-pods unseen,
That sheds rarest unknown delights
To those few that worship the dream.
For love squanders all its treasures,
Why should it ask for a return?

XVIII.

When youth departs, when love grows dim,
To grey routine hope dwindles down,
Sup well, sit warm, drink deep, sleep sound,
Thus run the hours from the glass.
New vistas beckon here and there
Yet men stay, sullen, where they are.

XIX.

Oh, to escape from the city,
Into the blue, shimmering night,
It speaks of all I could have loved,
It speaks of all I longed to see,
To understand, to own, and feel—
Why did so little come to me!

XX.

Ah, my fate is not different,
It is like that of all the rest.
There grew flowers at the wayside—
They were mine. I did not cull them.
There were chances made for blessing
When both of us remained unblessed.

XXI.

Can a being ever be yours?
Do you know the thoughts of a friend?
Why stray your wishes to strangers
When you own a heart that is true?
Sunlight passes. The night draws near.
Have you been loyal to anyone?

XXII.

We reap the harvest that we sow.
Rich crops may sear in rainless heat
Waste over night by wind or frost—
Harsh laws of chance and circumstance!
Yet if your seeds were vain as chaff
Your own will never come to you.

XXIII.

Let me pass on to the seashore,
Watch the traverse of white sails,
The seagulls in their spiral flight,
The breakers that brighten the waves,
And as in rambles of boyhood
Fling pebbles out into the sea.

XXIV.

They skip o'er the gleaming surface,
They sink and vanish from sight
As all that abides on this earth.
Yet on the surface like stray thought,
Each ripple owns an inner sway
And wave-like stirs the azure brine.

XXV.

The circle widens, travels farther,
With each emotion keenly felt
Onward it pushes 'cross the waves
Of storm-lashed oceans to unbend
Its tide of beauty on the shore
Of some hope-swept and sun-kissed isle.

XXVI.

And there amidst some rarer air
To blossom forth in some great deed—
May it be done by hand or mind—
For the upheaval of the race,
To reach some pinnacle of truth
Where light envelops you and all.

XXVII.

This is the land where giant minds,
Vaster than light, vaster than space
Hear whisperings of the infinite,
And with proud sorrow in their eyes,
Their wild-maned coursers ever ready,
Soar far into the skies of thought.

XXVIII.

Yet who can follow flights like these,
Who plucks the stars from night's blue vault!
Imagination, sluggish thing,
Will not obey the gayer moods,
Our mind can only peer as far
As fate has lent it eyes to see.

XXIX.

Men do not think, they merely dream,
They only long for crude, rough things,
Madly chasing will-o'-the-wisps,
Success by force they try to grasp,
It lures them on to wilder scenes
Where wolves in packs hunt dismal prey.

XXX.

Why this dull haste, this sordid waste
Of youth and manhood's fullest powers?
To amass riches for your heirs
The highest interests seem low,
And no man's pelf does command health,
Nor can it hold friendship or love.

XXXI.

So many do as others do,
They cannot rise from the green mould
With which their thoughts are overgrown.
For them no lotus petals blow,
They peevish bow to any yoke,
And mole-like dig beneath the ground.

XXXII.

Thus people born in low estate
Must drag their burden day by day,
'Tis hard to mend what is inborn
And slow the lift to higher planes.
If drudgery rules from morn to night—
They needs must suffer earthly bane.

XXXIII.

They stir the coals, press the bellows—
White iron shimmers in the forge
The air is dust, the houses black,
Smoke dragons coil 'round culm and stack
And belch foul breath into the street.
Where is the sun? Has day turned night?

XXXIV.

What use to speak to serfs like these
Of odors sweet of new-mown hay,
Red and blue flowers in the wheat,
The old homestead, barns and stables,
Cows shambling home the sunset road—
The angelus over harvest fields.

XXXV.

There's joy in labor; so they say,
And well that its praises are sung,
Or mankind in pale-mouthed despair
Would leave factory, forge and shop,
Stead living through their daily toil
Without a thought that death is near.

XXXVI.

Afraid of death men do not think
Of their vague meaning on this earth.
Blindly they hope for after-bliss
Or sneer at things they can not guess,
For is not death the cause of all
That ever troubled human brains!

XXXVII.

Why do we live, why do we hope,
Why does this world exist at all!
How do we dare to love and mate
When every path is strewn with thorns,
When children share in our fate
And age is glad to greet the night!

XXXVIII.

And is it endless sleep and night,
Deliverance or new keen pain?
Hot pitch or stale ambrosia!
There are too many gods adored,
Can one be right, all others wrong—
Who solves the problem why we are?

XXXIX.

There is no answer to the quest,
Who knows where we will meet again!
The star realms opening at night
Tell us of other wonder worlds—
Are they spinning through space for us,
Shall we breathe there an ampler air?

XL.

Follow yon pilgrims of the East
Through avenues of cypress dim,
Through golden temples, portals red—
Faithful they climb the holy hill
And there confront an empty space
Is that the signet of the grave!

XLI.

Some think they know and others doubt,
But who can offer balm to all.
If all were good and fair to meet
No need there be of paradise,
We would not long for other skies
And gather fruit from every tree.

XLII.

But what sad use the world has made
Of nature's boundless plenitude.
The frank and free, the sane and true
Are trodden down by foolish crowds.
Greed, barren, shameless, rules supreme,
There is no room for Christ on earth.

XLIII.

They dream of universal peace
In times when greed still cruder grows
Than in the days of Skalds and Huns—
Oh, dream of a fraternal race,
Of happiness to all of man!
When will love stronger prove than war!

XLIV.

The sword shall break the sword they say,
And force shall strangle force some day.
Thus men march toward battles red,
Their mangled bodies strew the plains,
While o'er the corpse the mother wails,
Her firstborn slain, her pride in life.

XLV.

Why should youth be killed from afar,
Races struggle in deadly clutch!
Are no more fallow fields to plough?
Is death's scythe not keen enough!
Oh, mankind, when will you waken
To an honor nobler than death!

XLVI.

If no tread of marching armies
Answered a nation's bugle peal,
If young and old refused to bear
Arms 'gainst brethren they do not know,
Then only, in some dim future
May we greet the dawn-doves of peace.

XLVII.

One holy war has to be fought—
To make both man and woman free:
The world will flash with signal lights,
Each land ring with its people's voice—
For from those crimson rivulets
Will rise a saner sun-warm life.

XLVIII.

For certain things needs must be changed,
Times cannot stay so dull and grey.
Men must rough a freer wind-blown life,
Women no longer shed their bloom
In drudgery for bed and fare,
And children age before their time.

XLIX.

Draughts of pure air, bright beams of light
Are free gifts coming from the skies,
Why should sad mothers, children frail
In dark and gruesome hovels pine,
Freeze and starve, and with thirsty eyes
See mirth with song and dance glide by.

L.

And hunger is a fearful thing.
It dwarfs the better part in man,
Naught but a withered husk it leaves
Of some thing that should live and breathe.
All nobler impulses turn ghosts,
Haunting waste places of the mind.

LI.

It lifts the knife to deadly thrusts,
It turns to brutes all those it sways,
It presses torches into fists,
And peaceful men turn to revolt.
We stand at brinks of volcanoes
Yet smilingly dot them with homes.

LII.

What can we do, how can we help!
The poor can never help the poor,
The rich but scatter alms derived
From what is due the common herd.
The weed plots are crowded thick,
Who cuts a path for weary feet!

LIII.

Oh, the helplessness of the aged,
Of the needy, sick, and lonely.
Can you explain why they suffer,
Must some lose all while others thrive?
Can no one wear a thornless crown
Without some hurt to human kind?

LIV.

Oh, these homes of blighted reason,
Who would not weep at sights like these.
Few years ago they were like us,
They worked and played, they loved and laughed,
And now—beasts without reason;
Where err their erstwhile joys and hopes!

LV.

And those who lurk in deadly sin,
Whose book of life reads blood and gold,
Thieves, bandits, outcasts, vagrom folks,
Eternal victims of the law,
Who cannot change, who have no chance
To wash their grimy hands from crime.

LVI.

They know not what to do on earth,
Their cup is filled with hate and lust.
None has taught them. Will you teach them?
Have you a larger soul than they?
You have drawn a lucky number,
For them gay fortune went astray.

LVII.

In foolish kindness some aspire
To staunch the ever-aching wound,
And so they teach, and so they preach.
How vain to think that your idea
May cure the vanity of things,
'Tis shuttlecock and battledore.

LVIII.

How can I give right directions
When I am a wanderer myself!
Onward I stroll and ever on
In my own way courting the sun
And fashioning Arcadia
Of passing winds and flying clouds.

LIX.

For my happiness cannot be yours;
In humble ecstasy I could live
In a hill-town, among roses,
With robins feasting at my table,
While woods and fields, valleys and streams
Around would be my promised land.

LX.

You might not like such simple fare,
For you the winds may blow too mild—
I cannot tread your well-paved roads
Though verdant they may seem to you.
Each path leads to some point of view,
What you like best, is best for you.

LXI.

Sunshine we want but also shadows,
Each joy demands its note of pain,
Each cheek must know the fall of tears
That many dream-swept hopes were vain.
Sorrow digs up unknown treasures
Within the caverns of the mind.

LXII.

Have you ever lost a treasure
More precious far than gold or health!
Trailed a white hearse with faltering steps
That bore your dearest dream away,
Sat at the deathbed of your mother,
Or closed a friend's dull staring eyes!

LXIII.

You know, the frost that chills the core,
That all we love is naught but clay.
Silent a boat glides o'er the Styx,
Yet it leaves light within its wake;
As weary plains grow green with rain
The soul expands in tear-starred nights.

LXIV.

Tears furrow thought, they strengthen will,
Cleanse the foul places of the mind,
Yield soothing light to ship-wrecked hearts.
Happy those who, sorrow-driven,
Bright moments wrest from waves of pain
And sail their barks to peaceful ports.

LXV.

This is the true philosophy,
Every child may learn the lesson—
Blaze your own trail the best you can
Without trespassing foreign ground;
Smile, play, and sing, and be alive
To every blow of circumstance.

LXVI.

To meet the hours as they come,
Salute the days as they pass by,
To bend your neck to no one's yoke,
To be full master of yourself,
To do a kindness when you can—
That is the happiness of life.

LXVII.

To help a friend in dire needs,
To speak a word to the oppressed,
To think of things that help mankind,
To scatter joy, unasked, unblessed—
For knowing minds divine the rest—
That is the happiness of life.

LXVIII.

Yes, life is vain, life is empty,
But why repeat a sad refrain,
This echo of Khayyam's quatrains,
As long as each day has a morrow,
As long as orchards bloom again,
And empty cups may be refilled.

LXIX.

Though we recall that days are short,
Let's make the passing moments hum.
Bees do murmur in the heather,
Does sundew exist only for them!
A little joy today seems fairer
Than the brightest strongholds of Spain.

LXX.

There are some joys all may attain,
To spouse some cause however slight,
To be a host to loyal friends,
To found some freeholds of your own,
Where mothers laugh and children romp,
And fare in health and fragrance there.

LXXI.

Some day religion unbiased
May sponsor stern needs of the day,
Life grow untrammeled and joyous
Without the black magic of law.
Science and art prove their uses
And quicken the heart-beats of all.

LXXII.

You, people, come out of your dreams,
Woo fortune and you may win her,
Fill the world with acts of good cheer,
Forget grey cares and ragged toil,
Face bravely the swell and the gale
And strike out for headlands unknown.

LXXIII.

Seek beauty and you will find her;
Brave the surge of the crowded street,
Or rest at the mountain's green slope
And commune with trees and the birds,
With the soil and the mossgrown rocks,
And pray at the shrine of the gods.

LXXIV.

There are roses and there is youth,
There are joys and sorrows and love,
Dawn and twilight, the noonday sun,
The rolling plains, sky and the sea,
None have lost their old-time mystery,
Events pass away, beauty survives.

LXXV.

Let us wrest beauty from all there is,
Each and all in their own poor way,
And blithely onward life will flow,
Rare like a long-drawn summer's eve,
And we'll hail and bless each moment
Before it fades into the dark.

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